actress Bella Thorne goes bold • A NEW LOOK AND HOME FOR MARINATE • UMAR RASHID'S SOLO SHOW

FlowerShop founders Isaac Muwaswes, G-Eazy and Gabriel Garcia discuss their first official flower drop next month by Jimi Devine
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ON THE COVER
Photography by Danny Liao
As new sensory-based cannabis line FlowerShop prepares for its first big flower drop, co-founders Isaac Muwaswes, Gabriel Garcia and Chief Mood Officer Gerald “G-Eazy” Gillum joined us to talk shop.

The formation of the trio itself is a fun tale. How do a popular fashion designer, a famous Oakland rapper, and Twitter’s former head of brand development link up?

“There was a brand called Brooklyn Circus and they had a store in San Francisco, and I was just a huge fan of the brand aesthetic,” G-Eazy told L.A. Weekly. “It was this kind of mid-century collegiate, a very refined gentleman’s brand.”

G-Eazy was hooked. At one point when he was self-funding a music video back in the day, he spent a big chunk of the funds on a jacket from Brooklyn Circus. Muwaswes joined Garcia’s efforts to grow Brooklyn Circus after years in tech.

“We just formed a friendship that was rooted in mutual respect from a mutual appreciation of attention to detail, design and craftsmanship,” G-Eazy said. “From the music side to the visuals within music, to the design that comes along with that and the sensibilities that there were parallels between.”

Roughly seven or eight years ago, G-Eazy’s relationship with Muwaswes and Garcia evolved from patron to collaborator. He found this only opened his eyes wider to the duo’s skill set.

“We eventually started working together on the merch and creative direction side and that gave me the biggest look at how brilliant these guys were in terms of not only just design but production and seeing visions through,” G-Eazy said. “Whether it was creating a jacket, t-shirt, a pair of sweatpants, socks, you know, it
just felt like we could do anything.”

G-Eazy spent much of the last decade in collaboration with Muwaswes and Garcia. “In those seven or eight years of touring the world together and creating countless pieces and producing all this stuff and doing popups all over the world, we definitely created a lifelong bond,” he told us. “When you have a bond of trust between friends, and you’ve already accomplished so much, you kind of just leave with that trust when you want to start something new. And you know, when they came to me with this idea it was kind of a no-brainer.”

Muwaswes noted the actual FlowerShop idea and vision had been kicking around in their heads for about three years prior to the launch. Back then, they asked themselves if they were to do something in cannabis, what would they want it to feel like? And what were the components they would need to accomplish the goal? “Early on, it was kind of just building out the concept, building out the foundation and all the multi-layers of the brand,” Muwaswes told L.A. Weekly. “And then I would say the last two years has really been getting it to market, finding the right partners on everything from the infrastructure and on the cannabis side, to the right partners from an investment funding perspective, to just building out our entire ecosystem of products and partners and everything else in between.”

While cannabis obviously comes to mind

FlowerShop preroll packs have already hit the market in indica, sativa, and hybrid options.

G-Eazy, Muwaswes, and Garcia review their wares
first, Muwaswes said a lot of their efforts are also going into what the brand is doing besides pot. “The kind of lifestyle side, which is everything from accessories to home goods to travel goods to clothes and everything in between,” he explained. “And all of those things take time to develop in the right way and develop the right products.”

We asked the trio what made this effort different from their past collaborating?

“I would say this one is different in the sense that we’re able to take everything that we love and we’re all good at, and apply it to this,” Garcia told L.A. Weekly. “I think through the last 15 years of all of our careers, if we’re honest with each other, it was a learning process and everything sometimes happens through trial and error, sometimes happens just like taking a stab at something and learning from it. And that’s why we felt so good about this brand. We felt like experts in our own lanes and just joining forces, combining all of our expertise, which I think really makes this one a good one.”

Muwaswes added he found the whole process to be both unique and compelling since it was the first time the trio had started something completely from scratch together.

“When we started working with G, he had his career already taking off, and that G-Eazy world was already very much on this kind of rocket ship that he had built,” Muwaswes said. “When Gabe and I started working together on Brooklyn Circus, Gabe had already founded Brooklyn Circus and that was already built and already taking off in that way. So from a conception standpoint, and kind of building something that didn’t exist at all before, that was unique and because of that we were able to go a lot deeper and build that [FlowerShop] world out in a lot more ways.”

One of the main facets of the brand is it leans heavily on the sensory side of things. Garcia referenced his early dispensary experiences as something that helped inspire something more approachable for the consumer.

“It was always a sensory experience, but I didn’t realize that’s what we were doing. We were just trying to engage with the customer and provide an experience that maybe they were used to at a high-end shop,” Garcia said.
As they built out the brand, they thought about sensory at every touchpoint. From when you first see the box, then feel it, smell it, touch it, and on through enjoying the product.

But there is the catch-22 of the sensory approach. While it makes perfect sense, some of the brands of the past that went in that direction essentially tainted the field for everyone. It got to the point where if it said sleepy or energy on the side of a box, there was a fair chance it was boof. We asked the trio about dealing with the approach and its impact on the minds of consumers.

"Yeah, for sure, 100% we knew that," Muwaswes replied. "We knew first and foremost, going into anything flower-related, it had to be fire, right? We had to make sure that no matter what we did, the product had to be able to speak for itself - aside from the packaging, aside from the design, aside from everything else."

G-Eazy called Muwaswes’ response the core essence of anything the trio has ever tried to do.

"I think it's more of even a philosophy and a worldview and the way we approach everything. If you want to do something and do it right, you know the authenticity has to be in it, and on through enjoying the product. From when you first see the box, then feel it, smell it, touch it, and through enjoying the product.

Muwaswes added when everyone is excited about sensory at every touchpoint, it has to be reusable from conception. The silicone cap doubles as an ashtray and incense holder.

G-Eazy called the quest to keep the jars filled a continuous process.

"It never stops, and it only actually increases in the process of giving love to the farmer, they also wanted to find a balance between the highly sterile pharmaceutical model and those filled with the wookery and smoke-filled rooms of yesteryear."

Muwaswes found the biggest misstep from their predecessors was the lack of actual shine behind it and do it authentically and do it right and that takes extra time."

G-Eazy emphasized that it takes time, extra attention to detail, extra work in getting the resources together.

"But at the end of the day, you are what you stand behind in terms of trying to build anything. And that's the way I've approached my music, that's the way they approached Brooklyn Circus," G-Eazy said. "I just think that's core to our fundamental philosophies and identities."

Muwaswes said it got to the point they expected something to go wrong on a daily basis. Especially with all the custom orders they were putting on the farms growing their product or even attempting to showcase it from a genetics perspective. We found this take very accurate. In the process of giving love to the farmer, they also wanted to find a balance between the highly sterile pharmaceutical model and those filled with the wookery and smoke-filled rooms of yesteryear.

"It never stops, and it only actually increases...in the process of giving love to the farmer, they also wanted to find a balance between the highly sterile pharmaceutical model and those filled with the wookery and smoke-filled rooms of yesteryear."

Muwaswes added when everyone is excited about what each other are doing it’s easy for the synergy to start. He pointed to their partner Halo’s effort to lay out what their genetics program will look like over the next 12 months on their quest for the heat. While some of the efforts have longer turnarounds, one magic new phenotype can change everything for any brand.

While the pandemic delaying the big launch, Garcia said it got to the point they expected something to go wrong on a daily basis. Especially with all the custom orders they were bringing in from overseas.

"So as much as it’s been super frustrating and expensive, it’s been a learning process and we’ve learned to just expect things to go wrong and prepare ourselves for the worst," Garcia said. "It’s w a hell of a time for the last few years trying to get this thing going, but we’re here man, we’re talking to you, shit, we’re doing something right.”
Amai magic

L.A. singer/songwriter Willa Amai takes great strides towards success

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

It's just reward for a young musician who has been singing for as long as she can remember. Describing herself as a “late walker but an early talker,” Amai says that she was penning rudimentary songs in preschool.

“During recess, I would walk around the perimeter of the playground and sing made up songs,” she says. “But I started playing piano when I was four. My teacher, even though I was taught classically, was also so encouraging of creativity. She simultaneously taught me how to read music and play classical music, and how to figure out the chords to the songs. When I was four, my teacher even though I was taught classically, was also so encouraging of creativity. She simultaneously taught me how to read music and play classical music, and also how to figure out the chords to the songs I would write. So then the songs I was writing became real songs in third grade-ish, when I was just 12 that changed everything. That’s when music started to feel like a real career. Now, the world’s her oyster and her current and future successes all stem from her current and future successes all stem from her current and future successes all stem from

“I love so many different genres and I really like to open myself up to them,” she says. “But I think the common thread is that I want to be as honest emotionally as possible. I think that the best music is the most relatable, not because we’ve all been in the same situations because we haven’t, it’s because we all have the same emotions effectively. When you strip away the facts, the evidence and the specifics of the situation, it’s sadness, grief, jealousy or spite. So I think that the more honest I can be with myself when I write, even if it’s difficult, and oftentimes it is, I think that’s what makes the best music.”

So that’s what she does, and those are the themes that run through her album, I Can Go to Bed Whenever.

“The album came out of, I was so anxious about growing up,” she says. “I’m in-between childhood and adulthood, and I didn’t feel like I knew where I was supposed to go. I didn’t know how I was supposed to act. Who I was supposed to be. I wanted to be an adult. I wanted to have the maturity of an adult, but at the same time I wasn’t prepared to let go of my childhood and all the things that entails. I was really grappling with it. Out of that anxiety came jealousy, anger and fear. But also love and joy, connections with other people. You can hear all of that in the album. It all documents the emotions that I went through, in that difficult time.”

Amai was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder at an early age, and music has proven to be a healthy outlet over the years. “Especially because a lot of my anxiety is rooted in my fear of the unknown,” she says. “Not understanding my emotions is really difficult for me, and writing music helps me understand the way that I feel. So it’s always been an outlet. It’s been a way for me to understand who I am. This album did exactly that for me. I’m in such a healthier place now mentally than I was when I wrote that music, and I think that the album itself is a huge reason for that.”

She was fortunate in that her album was effectively recorded prior to the pandemic stopping the world for a year, leaving her to just deal with the mixing, mastering and marketing during lockdown. She says that she feels she was in a luxurious position as a result, despite being able to perform live in front of a crowd and properly promote the album.

“I was really lucky to be able to do a lot of virtual shows, but it’s not the same,” she says. “You don’t get to connect with the audience in the way that you do in person. So it did present its challenges, but I’m definitely really lucky for the situation that I have been in.”

Fortunately, the world is starting to open up and touring is a real possibility again. That presents its own challenges though, as Amai balances her career in music with school.

“I go to a pretty intense high school,” she says. “I actually love school and I’m good at school. I’ve always loved to learn. So I’m going to high school and taking SATs, ACTs and AP exams simultaneously while releasing this album. Music has to coexist with school because school creates a lot of stress that music can alleviate. But also, school has to coexist with music because school provides a structure and stability that music will never have.”

That’s how level Willa Amai’s head is.

Willa Amai’s album I Can Go to Bed Whenever is out now.
Former LA Metro CEO Mr. Phillip Washington Tells His Story and Accomplishments

Listen at rebuildsocal.org/podcast
A NEW LOOK AND A NEW HOME FOR MARINATE

With The Help Of Dr. Christmas

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

At Yuriditsky and Scot Rog-ers’ stoner food journey that is Marinate has seen its ups and downs and relocations over the past four years, including kitchen fires. But thanks to local set designer extraordinaire, Dr. Christmas, the journey that started near the Hollywood Forever Cemetery has found its forever home in the heart of West Hollywood.

The four-month-old comic book store meets gay bar meets fast food shack meets orange walls covered in LGBTQ+ pop culture images of L.A. history, is a throwback to the old funky Sunset Blvd. shops of the ‘80s and looks like it’s been there for years. “I got to know them over the last year during quarantine while they were doing the best they could,” Pranga, who also curates the Hollywood Museum, tells L.A. Weekly. “They were going on about finding somebody to help them create a space. I told them if you’re going to be in Boystown, you’re going to have to do something that was inviting to the straight folk. Something that was interesting pop culture things, but also something that was inviting to the straight population and makes them feel comfortable walking in as well,” says Pranga. “The heart of West Hollywood has to be just a little naughty,” says Pranga. “Nowadays, the kids are so lucky, there’s a chance that only men will notice it. People just want to come and hang.”

The bright walls covered in the history of L.A. gay culture are an appetizing backdrop to Marinate’s menu, which includes signature favorites like grumpy fries (seasoned curly fries topped with buffalo sauce, ranch, bacon crumbles and fresh cut cilantro) root beer beef tacos and honey-lime shrimp sliders. Panels from the S.S. Poseidon ballroom in the 1972 classic Poseidon Adventure separate the kitchen from the eating area.

The small bathroom tucked in the back of the restaurant is everyone’s favorite spot, a melange of superhero images based on famous pinup art which was once only devoted to women. An eye-level shot of an impressively endowed Aladdin is strategically positioned over the urinal, designed for the 50/50 ratio of men and women. An eye-level shot of an impressively endowed Aladdin is strategically positioned over the urinal, designed for the 50/50 ratio of men and women.”

“I told them, your bathroom in a gay neighborhood has to be just a little naughty,” says Pranga. “Nowadays, the kids are so lucky, because there’s so much good representation in their mediums of seeing themselves. It wasn’t just picking superheroes who were gay or transgender, but also picking some classics like Superman and Wonder Woman. And there’s a little bit of fantasy art — I mean doesn’t everyone want to see Captain America making out with Black Panther?”

A WeHo fixture for more than 30 years, Marinate on the patio

The bright walls covered in LGBTQ+ pop culture images of L.A. history, is a throwback to the old funky Sunset Blvd. shops of the ‘80s and looks like it’s been there for years. “I mean, we’ve got 19 letters LG-BTQ+++ — I had to find interesting folks of representations of gay people who did interesting pop culture things, but also something that was inviting to the straight population and makes them feel comfortable walking in as well,” says Pranga. “At the end of the day, you have to have a place with heart. People just want to come and hang. Most of our bars have become so glitzed and glammed and have the personality of Saran Wrap.”

The image of West Hollywood is slowly becoming homogenized,” says Pranga. “A lot of us don’t want to lose the neighborhood’s original character. With all due respect to Lisa (Van der Pump) and the rest of them — they’re not helping. The heart-beat stopped for a year here and people have very short memories. It’s very tempting for developers to come in who don’t care about that character and just do whatever they want. I wanted this space to look like it’s been here for years.”

At the same time, the set decorator by trade wanted to create a blend of commonality and catering to a neighborhood that is looking for an affordable and comfortable place to interact. “I told them, your bathroom in a gay neighborhood has to be just a little naughty,” says Pranga. “Nowadays, the kids are so lucky, because there’s so much good representation in their mediums of seeing themselves. It wasn’t just picking superheroes who were gay or transgender, but also picking some classics like Superman and Wonder Woman. And there’s a little bit of fantasy art — I mean doesn’t everyone want to see Captain America making out with Black Panther?”

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“They mean doesn’t everyone want to see Captain America making out with Black Panther?”
BADASS BELLA
From Disney Comedies to Feature Films to her latest as a rockstar for Prime Video’s ‘Paradise City,’ actress Bella Thorne always goes bold

BY LINA LECARO

PARADISE CITY

Paradise City – gave her the opportunity to explore both sides of herself at once. The storyline concerns her character, Lily Mayflower (the band’s bass player/backup singer), who gets fired following the group’s reunion on the series.

After a drugged-out tryst with lead singer Johnny Faust (Andy Biersack), Lily sent a video of the roping to his girlfriend in hopes of breaking them up. Faust is now sober and as the band works toward a comeback and he gets engaged to his forgiving girlfriend, Lily – who has moved on and now has her own galpal – becomes collateral damage. The show, from record producer Ash Avildsen, is a sequel to his film American Satan.

Lily was played by another actress in the movie, but Thorne fell into the series’ sexy female rocker role rather seamlessly, donning punk chick gear and makeup, and playing the bassist in a badass yet vulnerable way that feels pretty authentic.

“I just really loved the character. I totally felt at home with her,” Thorne says via phone, during a break on set for her latest directorial gig – a video for rapper Juicy Jay. “I usually don’t play characters that are as close to home for me. I usually play characters that are opposite of my personal style so it was fun to play someone more similar, but show a different side.”

“I relate to her in a lot of ways, especially on the sexuality front, on being misunderstood, and being the only female in the band, even though there’s drama there,” she continues. “Of course she’s the first one to be kicked out, which I think is very interesting. It’s kind of her living in a boys crew and I’ve always kind of felt like that, like a tomboy. Lily’s ‘I don’t give a fuck’ attitude too; you know people say I don’t give a fuck, and yeah it’s true, but I do and I’ll always tell you the truth. It’s also obnoxious to say ‘I don’t give a fuck’ what anyone thinks about me. I think that the honesty that I put in the character that wasn’t originally there, I think that part of me coincides nicely.”

Thorne’s own music is a rock-rap-pop hybrid, but she says she grew up listening to ’80s and ’90s rock music and drew inspiration from the likes of Joan Jett, Billy Squibe and Nirvana for her stage performance in City, adding that she admires “the realness and the rawness,” and imperfect mojo of older rock sounds. “It’s much different from the music now,” she adds. “So I’m always going back to listen to older rock.”

As we discuss our favorite artists, she emphasizes a passion for rap and rock together and shares that Linkin Park has always been tops for her. She knows “every word to every song of theirs” and she says, “these are two genres that pretty much make up everything in my life. Rap and rock are both methods of preaching.”

Her latest sermon of sorts is called “Phantom,” and lyrically it’s an empowerment anthem about ghosting on controlling dudes, but the video, which Thorne directed, comes off like a creepy yet come-hither monster movie. Thorne raps and writthes throughout, donning wigs and skimpy glam get-ups as guitarist Malina Moye shreds on the track.

Her previous self-directed video ditty, for a song called ”Shake It,” got a lot of attention last year. So much so that it was temporarily taken down by YouTube (it’s back now). Starring porn star Abella Danger – who was also in Thorne’s award-winning adult film directorial debut called film Her & Him – it features the actresses kissing, romping in bed together and shaking it in white lingerie. Whether or not the title is meant as a subtle/subliminal ref to Thorne’s best-known TV show, Shake It Up, in which she co-starred with Zendaya on the Disney channel, is unknown, but as we start to discuss the public and media’s quick-to-judge tendencies of former Disney stars, it’s clear that she’s long been ready to move on from that part of her past.

Like fellow former Disney stars Miley Cyrus and Demi Lovato, Thorne is proudly queer (she came out as pansexual in 2019, though she is newly engaged to Italian pop star Benjamin Mascolo as of March). Like both actors/singers she’s received her share of online haters and trolls simply for being who she is whether she’s dating men or women. In terms of her roles, we ask if she’s chosen more provocative ones in hopes of breaking out of the Disney kid mold (two recent memorable turns included a Fight Club-style boxer in Chick Fight and a snarky cheerleader in The Babysitter series) but she’s understandably a bit weary of the question.

“Everyone asks me that and it’s like no, but I guess so? Everyone perceives it that way but before I did Disney, I was on HBO. I was on Entourage. I was on Showtime. You name it, I was acting,” she says matter of factly. “Producers were like, ‘well she can scream and cry on cue’, get her in here. If you have some fucked up child role, get her. I had never done comedy before in my life and I never thought I’d get a comedic role, ever. People are like ‘Disney, Disney, Disney’ and I’m like, nah… I started years before and I’ve been busting my ass.”

Though some assume she’s been trying to be a wild child in her actions (such as creating her popular Only Fans page) and film choices, Thorne insists her career has always been about challenging herself. “I just want to tackle roles that showcase my acting,” she adds.

In addition to film and TV, Thorne clearly likes to have lots of other endeavors and irreverent irons in the fire. A few years ago she turned her L.A. home into an art installation, with a hot pink exterior, thematic muraled rooms and more. Known as “The Trippy Twins Funhouse,” she used it for photoshoots and as an events space. Though she put it on the market last year, she says her love of real estate has remained and she plans to do something similar, but “not as crazy” at another property soon.

Her production company Content X has a multitude of projects coming up, including some she can’t really talk about yet. Paradise City season 2 is still tentative, and she’s currently focused on a still-unannounced project she wrote and created, which she has been working on since she was 18. “I finally signed contracts with the team and I’m excited to see my baby come to life,” she says, trying not to reveal too much until official announcements are scheduled. “This show is everything to me. What I can say about it is it’s dark, it’s noir and it’s very close to home.”
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Umar Rashid, aka Frohawk Two Feathers, aka Kent Cyclone (it’s a long story) practices a cheerful, bloody anti-Imperialist critique of colonialism in his art, using an eccentric folkloric visual style to radically reimagine power structures of geopolitical violence. He regularly generates fantastical, fully imagined societal mythologies – sweeping sagas of war, conquest, religion, enslavement, and genocide. His exceptionally fine works currently on view at both the Hammer and the Huntington in Los Angeles, from Malibu to Dodger Stadium.

Across town at the transformative arts gallery in downtown’s Historic Core neighborhood, Rashid’s installation of his 2021 COLA Fellowship project, Per Capita, continues on this journey to chronicle and recontextualize the realities and ongoing legacy of colonialism in Los Angeles. In this iteration of the big idea, Rashid focuses more tightly on the lived experiences, complicity and strategies for survival of individuals within the racialized, gendered and ideologically chaotic story of a city’s founding.

The exhibition includes a range of mixed media paintings and wall works, including depictions of surreal cartographic scenes of great battles with mounted armies and inexplicable lasers, rolling heads and swords galore. Accompanying individual portraits like character studies, tableaux taking aim at cross-purposed social dynamics, and views of injustices crying out for resistance and relief give a more intimate perspective on how history, even surreal versions of it, might unfold. The titles of several works in the show, as is always the case with Rashid, spin a tale of poetic evocation and event specificity: 1794 St. Bertrand (St. Louis) Mugwayan, Shoshone trapper and interpreter prepares to execute her abusive Frenglish husband, while Pompey, body slave to the Bonnie Prince Charles Sidney Looks on. / The Bonnie Prince Charles Sidney Signs, former Pharaoh of Novum Eboracum (New York) and his lover, Achille St. Marc, explorer and fighter from the Caribbean, finish the immolation show and invite Mugwayan to join them on their journey to the Pacific.

But the main point of the COLA project was to explore the sculptural aspect of this world-building more deeply, which Rashid does in both unconventional and dimensional wall pieces, such as a ritual drum, heavily embellished ceremonial tapestry, upcycled energy pyramids, and the centerpiece of the installation – a representation of the famous Babylonian Ishtar Gate in Dodger Blue instead of lapis lazuli, with pitbulls and rattlesnakes in place of lions and asps.

What Rashid does is important and even at times quite heavy; its subjects are racism, death, struggle, exploitation and injustice and the pictures don’t pull any punches. At the same time, he has an irrepressible wit and a taste for ironic humor – a talent for landing blows with a wry joyfulness, beguiling eye for detail and sometimes outright humor that makes the experience of viewing the work a pleasure. This cognitive dissonance is just the right state of mind to receive the fullness of Rashid’s complex of resonant metaphors, and to step into his world of fiction that is more true than the truths we’ve been taught.

Per Capita is on view through June 30 at transformative arts, 410 South Spring St., downtown; Monday - Friday, noon-5pm and by appointment; free; transformativenow.org.
Furniture Buyer: Req min. 110 mos. exp. Identify trends, new products, and new products in travel, 25% int'l travel. Send resumes to: HR, So Young America, Inc., 4422 E Route 66, Ste. 150, Gardena, CA 90240.

Senior Software Developer: F/T, Full-time, Los Angeles, CA. Requires knowledge of systems or Internet Development in the following areas: Java, C++, Microsoft .NET, etc. Send resumes to: HR, So Young America, Inc., 4422 E Route 66, Ste. 150, Gardena, CA 90240.

Clinical Research Coordinator: Sought by Cedar-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, CA. Provide study start-up and ongoing support for protocol eligibility. Send Resumes to: Thomas O’Donnell, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, 8250 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Database Engineer: F/T, MS in Computer Science and Management and related, Mail resume to: Electric Power Group LLC, 251 S. Lake Ave., Suite 500, Pasadena, CA 91101.

Business Development Manager: Sought by Viant Technology, LLC in Los Angeles, CA, to develop and execute strategies to identify new business opportunities. Must be fluent in English and Spanish. Send resumes to: HR, Viant Technology, LLC, 400 E. 3rd St., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90011.

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